Can crowding events change a man's moral nature in one round of the clock? Was it any one event or all of them combined that made Lanyard turn his back on his former life? As the Lone Wolf leaps into action like a flash of self-controlled light in the scenes that follow you may find a better answer than the obvious one given by the author.

THE LONE WOLF

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

CHAPTER I.

—1—

Troyon's.

Troyon's occupied a corner in a jungle of side streets, well withdrawn from the bustle of the adjacent boulevards of St. Germain and St. Michel, and in its day was a restaurant famous with a fame jealously guarded by a select circle of patrons. Its cooking was the best in Paris, its cellar second to none, its rates ridiculously reasonable; yet Baedeker knew it not. And in the wisdom of those who did know this was well; it were a pity to loose upon so excellent an establishment those swarms of tourists that profane every temple of gastronomy on the right bank of the Seine.

The building was of three stories, painted a dingy drab, and trimmed with dull-green shutters. The restaurant occupied almost all of the street front of the ground floor; a blank, noncommital double doorway at one extreme of the plate-glass windows was seldom open and even more seldom noticed.

A medieval maze of corridors, long and short, complicated by many unexpected steps and staircases and enigmatic doors, running every which way, and as a rule landing one in the wrong room, linked together some twoscore bedchambers. There were no salons or reception rooms, there was never a bathroom, there wasn't even running water aside from two hallway taps, one to each story.

With such accommodations the guests of Troyon's were well content. One did much as one pleased there, providing one's bill was paid with tolerable regularity and the hand kept supple that operated the cordon in the small hours of the night. Papa Troyon came from a tribe of innkeepers and was liberal-minded; while as for madame, his wife, she cared for nothing but pieces of gold.

To Troyon's on a wet winter night in the year 1893 came the child who, as a man, was to call himself Michael Lanyard. He must have been four or five years old at that time; an age at which consciousness is just beginning to recognize its individuality and memory registers with capricious irregularity. He arrived at the hotel in a state of excitement involving an almost abnormal sensitiveness to impressions; but that was soon drowned deep in dreamless slumber of healthy exhaustion; and when he came to look back through a haze of days, of which each had made its separate and imperative demand upon his budding emotions, he found his store of memories strangely dulled and disarticulate. And the child soon gave over his instinctive, but rather inconsecutive, efforts to retrace his history—life at Troyon's furnished him with compelling and obliterating interests. Madame saw to that.

It was madame who took charge of the child when the strange man dragged him crying from the cab through a cold, damp place gloomy with shadows and upstairs to a warm, bright bedroom; a formidable body, this madame, with cold eyes and many hairy moles, who made odd noises in her throat while she undressed the little boy with the man standing by, noises meant to sound compassionate and maternal, but, to the child at least, hopelessly otherwise.

Then drowsiness stealing upon one over a pillow wet with tears—oblivion.

And madame it was who ruled with iron hand the strange new world to which the boy awakened.

The man was gone by morning, and the child never saw him again; but inasmuch as those about him understood no English and he no French, it was some time before he comprehended the false assurances of madame that his father had gone on a journey, but would presently return. The child knew positively that the man was not his father, but when he was able to make this correction the matter had faded into insignificance—life had become too painful to leave time or inclination for the adjustment of such minor and incidental questions as that of one's parentage.

The little boy soon learned to know himself as Marcel, which wasn't his name, and before long was unaware he had ever worn another. As he grew older he became known as Marcel Troyon; but by then he had forgotten how to speak English.

It was a few days after his arrival that the warm, bright bedchamber was exchanged for a cold, dark closet opening off madame's boudoir, a cupboard furnished with a rickety cot and a broken chair, lacking any provision for heat or light and ventilated solely by a transom over the door; and inasmuch as madame shared the French horror of drafts and so kept her boudoir hermetically sealed nine months of the year, the transom didn't help matters much. But that closet formed the boy's sole refuge, if a precarious one, through several years; there alone was he ever safe from kicks and cuffs and scoldings for faults beyond his comprehension; but he was never permitted a candle, and the darkness and loneliness made the place one of haunted terror to the sensitive and imaginative nature of the growing child.

He soon learned an almost uncanny cunning in the art of effacing himself when she was imminent, to be as still as death and to move with the silence of a wraith. Not infrequently his huddled immobility in a shadowy corner escaped her notice as she passed. But it exasperated her beyond measure to look up, when she fancied herself alone, and become aware of the wide-eyed, terrified stare of the transfixed child.

That he was privileged to attend school at all was wholly due to a great fear that obsessed madame of doing anything to invite the interest of the authorities. She was an honest woman, according to her lights, an honest wife, and kept an honest house; but she feared the gendarmerie more than the wrath of God. And by ukase of government a certain amount of education was compulsory. So Marcel learned, among other things, to read, and thereby took his first blind step toward salvation.

Before Marcel was eleven he had read "Les Miserables" with intense appreciation. His reading, however, was not long confined to works in the French language. Now and again some departing guest would leave an English noved in his room, and these Marcel treasured beyond all other books; they seemed to him, in a way, a part of his birthright. He called himself, secretly, English in those days, because he knew he wasn't French—that much, at least, he remembered. And then some accident threw his way a small English-French dictionary. He was able to read English before he could speak it.

Out of school hours a drudge and scullion, the associate of scullions and their immediate betters, drawn from that caste of loose tongues and looser morals which breeds servants for small hotels, Marcel at eleven—as nearly as his age can be computed—possessed a comprehension of life at once exact, exhaustive and appalling.

By fifteen he had developed into a long, lank, loutish youth, with a face of extraordinary pallor, a sullen mouth, hot, black eyes, and dark hair like a mane, so seldom was it trimmed. He looked considerably older than he was, and the slightness of his body was deceptive, disguising a power of sinewy strength. More than this, he could care very handily for himself in a scrimmage—la savate (fighting with the feet) had no secrets from him, and he had picked up tricks from the Apaches quite as effectual as any in the manual of jiujitsu.

Paris he knew as you and I know the palms of our hands, and he could converse with the precision of the native-born in any one of the city's several odd argots. To these accomplishments he added that of a thoroughly practiced petty thief.

His duties were by day those of valet de chambre on the third floor; by night he acted as omnibus in the restaurant. For these services he received no pay and less consideration from his employers—who would have been horrified by an innuendo that they countenanced slavery—only his board and a bed in a room on the ground floor at the back of the house boasting a small window overlooking a narrow alley.

He was routed out before daylight, and his working day ended, as a rule, at ten in the evening—but once back in his kennel, its door closed, Marcel was free to squirm out of the window and roam and range Paris at will. And it was thus that he came by most of his knowledge of the city.

But for the most part Marcel preferred to lie abed and read himself half blind by the light of purloined candle-ends. Books he borrowed as of old from the rooms of guests or else pilfered from quayside stalls. But now and again the guests would pay further, if unconscious tribute, through the sly abstraction of small coins. Your true Parisian, however, keeps track of his money to the ultimate sou, an idiosyncrasy which obliged the boy to practice most of his peculations on the fugitive guest of foreign extraction.

In the number of these, perhaps the one best known to Troyon's was Bourke.

He was a quick, compact, dangerous little Irishman who had fallen into the habit of "resting" at Troyon's whenever a vacation from London seemed a prescription apt to prove wholesome for a gentleman of his kidney; which was rather frequently, arguing that Bourke's professional activities were fairly onerous.

Having received most of his education in Dublin university, Bourke spoke the purest English known, or could when so minded, while his facile Irish tongue had caught the trick of an accent which passed unchallenged on the boulevards. He had an alert eye for pretty women, a heart as big as all outdoors, no scruples worth mentioning, a secret sorrow, and a pet superstition.

The hue of his hair, a clamorous red, was the spring of his secret sorrow. By that token he was a marked man.

His pet superstition was that as long as he refrained from practicing his profession in Paris, Paris would stand toward him as an impregnable tower of refuge. The world owed Bourke a living, or he so considered, but Paris was tax-exempt as long as Paris let him alone.

Not only did Paris suit his tastes excellently, but there was no place, in Bourke's esteem, comparable with Troyon's for peace and quiet. Hence his visits were unpunctuated by trials of rival hostelries, and Troyon's was always expecting Bourke for the simple reason that he invariably arrived unexpectedly, with neither warning nor ostentation, stopped as long as he liked, whether a day or a week or a month, and departed in the same manner.

His daily routine, as Troyon's came to know it, varied but slightly—he breakfasted abed, about half after ten, dined early and well, but always alone, and shortly afterward departed by cab for some well-known bar on the Rive Droite; and the hour of his return remained a secret between himself and the concierge.

On retiring Bourke would empty his pockets upon the dressing table, where the boy, Marcel, bringing up Bourke's petit dejeuner the next morning, would see displayed a tempting confusion of gold and silver and copper, with a wad of banknotes, and the customary assortment of personal hardware.

Now inasmuch as Bourke was never wide awake at that hour, and always, after acknowledging Marcel's "bonjour," rolled over and snored for glory and the saints, it was against human nature to resist the lure of that dressing table. Marcel seldom departed without a coin or two.

He had yet to learn that Bourke's habits were those of an Englishman, who never goes to bed without leaving all his pocket money in plain sight and—carefully catalogued in his memory.

One morning in the spring of 1904 Marcel served Bourke his last breakfast at Troyon's.

The Irishman had been on the prowl the previous night, and his rasping snore was audible even through the closed door when Marcel knocked and, receiving no answer, used the pass key and entered.

At this the snore was briefly interrupted; Bourke, visible at first only as a flaming shock of hair protruding from the bedclothes, squirmed an eye above his artificial horizon, opened it, mumbled inarticulate acknowledgment of Marcel's salutation, and passed blatantly into further slumbers.

Marcel deposited his tray on a table beside the bed, then moved quietly to the windows, closed them, and drew the lace curtains together. The dressing table between the two windows displayed, amid the silver and copper, more gold coins than it commonly did—some eighteen or twenty louis altogether. Adroitly abstracting in passing a piece of ten francs, Marcel went on his way rejoicing, touched a match to the fire ready laid in the grate, and was nearing the door when, casting one casual parting glance at the bed, he became aware of a notable phenomenon—the snoring was going on lustily, but Bourke was watching him with both eyes wide and filled with interest.

Startled, and, to tell the truth, a bit indignant, the boy stopped as though at word of command. But after the first flush of astonishment his young face hardened to immobility. Only his eyes remained constant to Bourke's.

The Irishman, sitting up in bed, demanded and received the gold piece, and went on to indict the boy for the embezzlement of several sums running into a number of louis.

Marcel, reflecting that Bourke's reckoning was still some louis shy, made no bones about pleading guilty. Interrogated, the culprit deposed that he had taken the money because he needed it to buy books. No, he wasn't sorry. Yes, it was probable that, granted further opportunity, he would do it again. Advised that he was apparently a case-hardened young criminal, he replied that youth was not his fault; with years and experience he would certainly improve.

Puzzled by the boy's attitude, Bourke agitated his hair and wondered aloud how Marcel would like it if his employers were informed of his peculations.

Marcel looked pained, and pointed out that such a course on the part of Bourke would be obviously unfair; the only real difference between them, he explained, was that where he filched a louis Bourke filched thousands, and if Bourke insisted on turning him over to the mercies of Mme. and Papa Troyon, who would certainly summon a sergeant de ville, he, Marcel, would be quite justified in retaliating by telling the prefecture de police all that he knew about Bourke.

This was no chance shot, and went home. When, dismayed, the Irishman blustered, demanding to know what the boy meant by his damned impudence, Marcel quietly advised him that one knew what one knew—if one read the English newspaper in the cafe, as Marcel did, one could hardly fail to remark that monsieur always came to Paris after some notable burglary had been committed in London; and if one troubled to follow monsieur by night, as Marcel had, it became evident that monsieur's first calls in Paris were invariably made at the establishment of a famous fence in the Rue des Trois Freres; and, finally, one drew one's own conclusions when strangers dining in the restaurant—as on the night before, by way of illustration—strangers who wore all the hallmarks of police de-

The Boy Stopped as Though at Word of Command.

tectives from England, catechized one about a person whose description was the portrait of Bourke, and promised a hundred-franc note for information concerning the habits and whereabouts of that person, if seen.

Marcel added, while Bourke gasped for breath, that the gentleman in question had spoken to him alone, in the absence of other waiters, and had been fobbed off with a lie.

But why—Bourke wanted to know—had Marcel lied to save him, when the truth would have earned him a hundred francs?

"Because," Marcel explained coolly, "I, too, am a thief. Monsieur will perceive it was a matter of professional honor."

Now the Irish have their faults, but ingratitude is not of their number.

Bourke, packing hastily to leave Paris, France, and Europe by the first feasible route, still found time to question Marcel briefly, and what he learned from the boy about his antecedents so worked with gratitude upon the Irishman's sentimental nature that when, on the third day following, the Cunarder Carpathia left Naples for New York, she carried among her first-class passengers not only a gentleman whose brilliant black hair and glowing pink complexion rendered him a bit too conspicuous for his own comfort, but also, in the second cabin, his valet, a boy of sixteen who looked eighteen.

The gentleman's name on the passenger list didn't, of course, in the least resemble Bourke. His valet's was given as Michael Lanyard.

The origin of this name is obscure; Michael, being easily corrupted into good Irish Mickey, may safely be attributed to Bourke; Lanyard has a tang of the sea which suggests a reminiscence of some sea tale prized by the pseudo Marcel Troyon.

In New York began the second stage in the education of a professional criminal. The boy would have searched far to find a preceptor of more sound attainments than Bourke. It is, however, only fair to say that Bourke would have looked far for an apter pupil.

Under his tutelage Michael Lanyard learned many things; he became a mathematician of considerable promise, an expert mechanician, a connoisseur of armor plate and explosives in their more pacific applications, and he learned to grade precious stones with a glance. Also, because Bourke was born of gentlefolk, he learned to speak English and what clothes to wear and when to wear them, as well as the cultivated use of knife and fork at table; and because Bourke was a diplomatist doomed to blush unseen, he acquired the knack of being at ease in every grade of society—he came to know that a self-made millionaire, taken the right way, is as approachable as one whose millions date back even unto the third generation; he could order a dinner at Sherry's as readily as drinks at Sharkey's. Most valuable accomplishment of all, he learned to laugh.

By way of by-products he picked up a working acquaintance with American, English and German slang—French slang he already knew as a mother tongue — considerable geographical knowledge of the capitals of Europe, America and Illinois, a taste that discriminated between tobacco and the stuff sold as such in France, and a genuine passion for fine paintings.

Finally Bourke drilled into his apprentice the three cardinal principles of successful cracksmanship—to know his ground thoroughly before venturing upon it; to strike and retreat with the swift precision of a hawk; to be friendless.

And the last of these was the greatest.

"You're a promising lad," he said—so often that Lanyard would almost wince from that formula of introduction—"a promising lad, though it's sad I should be to say it instead of proud as I am. For I've made ye—but for me you'd long since have matriculated at La Tour Pointue and graduated with the canaille of the Sante. And in time you may become a first-chop operator, which I'm not and never will be; but if you do, 'twill be through fighting shy of two things. The first of them's woman, and the second is man. To make a friend of a man you must lower your guard. Ordinarily 'tis fatal. As for woman, remember this, m' lad: to let love into your life you must open a door no mortal hand can close. And God only knows what'll follow in.

"If ever you find you've fallen in love and can't fall out, cut the game on the instant, or you'll end wearing stripes or broad arrows—the same as myself would, if this cursed cough wasn't going to be the death of me. No, m' lad: take a fool's advice (you'll never get better) and when you're shet of me, which will be soon, I'm thinking, take the lonesome road and stick to the middle of it. 'He travels the fastest who travels alone' is a true saying, but 'tis only half the truth: he travels the farthest into the bargain. Yet the lonesome road has its drawbacks, lad—it's damned lonely!"

Bourke died in Switzerland of consumption, in the winter of 1910—Lanyard at his side till the end.

Then the boy set his face against the world—alone, lonely and remembering.

CHAPTER II.

—1—

Return.

His return to Troyon's, although an enterprise which Lanyard had been contemplating for several years, ever since the death of Bourke, came to pass at length almost purely as an affair of impulse.

He had come through from London by the afternoon service—via Boulogne—traveling light, with nothing but a brace of handbags and his life in his hands. Two coups to his credit since the previous midnight had made the shift advisable, though only one of them, the later, rendered it urgent.

Scotland Yard would, he reckoned, require at least twenty-four hours to unlimber for action on the Omber affair; but the other, the disappearance of the Huysman plans, although not consummated before noon, must have set the chancelleries of at least three powers by the ears before Lanyard was fairly entrained at Charing Cross.

Now his opinion of Scotland Yard was low; its emissaries must operate gingerly to keep within the laws they serve. But the agents of the various continental secret services have a way of making their own laws as they go along—and for these Lanyard entertained a respect little short of profound.

He would not have been surprised had he run foul of trouble on the pier at Folkestone, Boulogne, as well, figured in his imagination as a crucial point—its harbor lights, heaving up over the grim, gray waste, peered through the deepening violet dusk to find him on the packet's deck, responding to their curious stare with one no less insistently inquiring. But it wasn't until he reached the Gare du Nord itself that he found anything to shy at.

Dropping from train to platform, he surrendered his luggage to a ready facteur and followed the fellow through the crush, elbowed and shouldered, offended by the pervasive reek of chilled steam and coal gas and dazzled by the brilliant glare of the overhanging electric arcs.

Almost the first face he saw turned his way was that of Roddy.

The man from Scotland Yard was stationed at one side of the platform gates. Opposite him stood another decorative official from the prefecture de police. Both were scanning narrowly every face in the tide that churned between them.

Wondering if through some fatal freak of fortuity these were acting under late telegraphic advices from London, Lanyard held himself well in hand. The first indication of an intent to hinder him would have proved the signal for a spectacular demonstration of the ungentle art of not getting caught with the goods.

And for twenty seconds, while the crowd milled slowly through the narrow exit, he was as near to betraying himself as he had ever been—nearer, for he had marked down the point on Roddy's jaw where his first blow would fall and just where to plant a coup de savate most surely to incapacitate the minion of the prefecture; and all the while he was looking the two over with a manner of the most calm and impersonal curiosity.

But beyond an almost imperceptible narrowing of Roddy's eyes when they met his own, as if the Englishman were struggling with a faulty memory, neither police agent betrayed a sign of recognition.

And then Lanyard was outside the station, his porter introducing him to a ramshackle taxicab.

"Troyon's!" he told the cocher.

When at length his conveyance drew up at the historic corner Lanyard, alighting, could have rubbed his eyes to see the windows of Troyon's all bright with electric light.

Somehow, and most unreasonably, he had always believed the place would go to the hands of the house wrecker unchanged.

A smart portier ducked out, seized his luggage and held an umbrella. Lanyard composed his features to immobility as he entered the hotel, of no mind to let the least flicker of recognition be detected in his eyes when they should encounter familiar faces.

And this was quite as well—for again the first he saw was Roddy's!

The man from Scotland Yard had just surrendered hat, coat and umbrella to the porter in the lobby, and was turning through swinging doors to the dining room. Again taking in Lanyard, his glance seemed devoid of any sort of intelligible expression; and before quitting the lobby Roddy paused long enough to order a fire laid in his room.

So he was stopping at Troyon's—and didn't care who knew it!

His doubts altogether dissipated by this discovery, Lanyard followed his natural enemy into the dining room with an air as devil-may-care as one could wish and so impressive that the maitre d'hotel abandoned the detective to the mercies of one of his captains and himself hastened to seat Lanyard and take his order.

This last disposed of, Lanyard surrendered himself to new impressions—of which the first proved a bit disheartening.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

His Place.

"I don't know what you will do with my boy in your school. I am sorry to say he is a chronic kicker."

"Just what we want. We'll put him on the football team."

Of Course.

"I suppose the bridegroom wore the conventional black?"

"Yes, and the still more conventional worried look."

Answered.

"I have fallen arches. What shall I do?"

"See the building inspector."

Poisoned by Aeroplane Varnish

The enormously increased production of aeroplanes during the war lends point to a warning regarding the varnish employed. At the aeroplane works in Johannisthal a number of workmen employed in the varnishing department were taken seriously ill, and two deaths resulted. The most important symptom was jaundice due to decomposition of the blood. On investigation the cause was found to be poisoning by tetrachlorethane, the only solvent known for the highly combustible acetylcellulose. These accidents led to an order forbidding the use of solvents containing a high percentage of tetrachlorethane.—Scientific American.

A Roland for an Oliver.

"Am I the only girl you ever loved?"

"Well, if you've had any experience at being loved, you ought to tell that by the way I make it."

Matter of Speculation.

Penelope—"Did the play have a happy ending?" Percival—"How should I know?" Penelope—"You saw it, didn't you?" Percival—"Yes, but the hero and the heroine married each other."—Judge.

Fabulous Bird.

The roc, a fabulous bird often referred to in the "Arabian Nights," was believed to be of such enormous size and strength as to be able to carry seven elephants in its talons.

Chinese Using Oil Lamps.

The first kerosene oil lamps seen by the Chinese were in the homes of the missionaries. They were soon in such demand that in a recent year oil to the value of $14,500,000 was sent to China.

Never a Popular Man.

A confirmed weather prophet gets out of touch with his fellow man. His idea of real happiness is to give out a prediction of a blizzard and have it come true.

On Framing Pictures

A few years ago I heard George Bernard Shaw give a lecture before the Camera club in London. The one thing that I remember that he said was that, in going into a house, he could always tell the degree of culture and refinement there was in that house by the width of the mats on the pictures. Of course, Mr. Shaw was trying to be funny as usual, and as usual there was lots of truth in what he said. If every one would make a tour of the house with that in mind, take down those pictures with the wide white or colored mats and have them reframed close, or if a certain one seems to demand a mat, have a very narrow one put on it, they would really be surprised to see the improvement in the appearance of the rooms. In many cases the same frames could be used; they would only need to be cut down.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Vinegar for Colored Clothes.

A cupful of vinegar added to the water in which colored clothes are washed will often prevent the color from running.